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New York

President:	Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein	(Jordan)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Estreme
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	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
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	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Rwanda	Mr. Nduhungirehe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Power

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Leila Zerrougui, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict; Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide; Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Kyung-wha Kang, Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Ms. Zerrougui.

Ms. Zerrougui: I wish to thank you, Sir, for inviting me to brief the Security Council on our visit to the Central African Republic from 17 to 21 December 2013, and in particular on the situation of children and armed conflict. At the outset, allow me to also express my appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, Ambassador Sylvie Lucas, and General Babacar Gaye, Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), for their leadership and support for the children and armed conflict mandate.

In the light of growing protection concerns resulting from mounting attacks against civilians and the deep human rights crisis ravaging the country, I travelled with my colleagues, Special Adviser Adama Dieng and Ms. Nancee Oku Bright, a senior representative of the Office of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura, to assess the impact of the conflict on women and children as well as the risk of genocide. The goal of our mission, in line with the "Rights up front" framework, was to advocate for action and responses from the transitional authorities and obtain their commitment to stopping the violence. Our visit took place soon after the 5 December attacks on the capital, Bangui, and against the backdrop of increasing sectarian violence, which is continuing today.

Despite its chronic instability, the Central African Republic had not previously suffered from such a violent outbreak of religiously motivated violence. Yet, today, the country is trapped in a spiral of vengeance that has destroyed the social fabric and undermined trust among communities for generations to come. I have witnessed members of those communities pitted against one another, fleeing and seeking refuge in churches and mosques. They are living in fear of being attacked. They are even afraid of burying their dead. Entire villages have been burned and are burning down as we speak in this Chamber today.

The impact of the conflict on children has been dramatic, with unprecedented levels of brutality. Children have been directly attacked, maimed, killed and beheaded in Bangui, Bouar, Bossangoa and Bozoum. For over a year, ex-Séléka combatants and, more recently, anti-Balaka militias, have actively recruited children and forced them to commit atrocities. Recent estimates indicate that as many as 6,000 children could be currently associated with armed forces and groups. During my visit, I witnessed youths who had taken up arms, having been manipulated by both sides and divided along religious lines. They have become both victims and perpetrators of the ongoing sectarian violence.

The lack of security has resulted in the displacement over the course of 2013 of nearly half a million children across the country. Those children are in urgent need of protection and assistance and are at a greater risk of suffering violations. Schools and hospitals have been attacked and looted. Medical personnel have been repeatedly threatened and brutally targeted everywhere in the country, leaving an already fragile social infrastructure and basic services in complete disarray.

Our visit coincided with the transfer of authority from the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic to the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (MISCA) and with the initial phase of the deployment of Operation Sangaris. While the presence of African Union and French forces is deterring ongoing violence, too many civilians remain without basic protection, as crimes are being committed daily in Bangui and in the provinces. I am hopeful that the commendable efforts of the African Union, the deployment of additional troops by the European Union, together with the evolution of the political landscape, will contribute to re-establishing law and

order. The rapid strengthening of BINUCA and the deployment of MISCA's civilian component will be key to ensuring adequate human rights monitoring and protection expertise.

We must urgently ensure better coordination among all actors on the ground, including through civil-military liaisons. We should optimize existing resources in Bangui and scale up capacity in the provinces where military deployment and the presence of humanitarian actors remains too limited.

On a positive note, on 6 January the process of identifying and separating children started at five ex-Séléka cantonment sites. On 17 January, 23 children were released in Bangui and taken to a UNICEF-supported transit and orientation centre. That is the result of the dialogue between United Nations representatives and the transitional authorities to allow child protection actors unimpeded access to military and cantonment sites. The former head of the transition reiterated that commitment to me during our visit, and it is my hope that that engagement will continue in the new phase of the transitional process. I am encouraged by the recent election of Ms. Catherine Samba-Panza as Head of the Transition in the Central African Republic, and I join her in urging all parties to immediately stop the violence.

The process of separating and reintegrating children associated with armed forces and groups in the Central African Republic will not be an easy task. First, it cannot happen in a vacuum but must be part of a comprehensive and holistic disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. Secondly, the current United Nations civilian capacity remains all too limited and must be strengthened urgently to confront the ongoing situation, as well as the challenges of the DDR process.

Child protection actors need adequate human and financial resources to provide the needed reintegration assistance. At the same time, the sustained support and cooperation of the military forces on the ground are key to ensuring children's security and continued protection. As recent experience in the Central African Republic shows, children formerly associated with armed forces and groups are especially vulnerable to rerecruitment and retaliatory violence.

We need to send a stronger signal to the perpetrators of these atrocious crimes that they will be held to account. The international community should spare no effort and use all the tools at its disposal. It is crucial to assist the transitional authorities to restore law enforcement and establish a judicial response to the ongoing violations. This is essential to deterring further violence and starting to re-establish trust among communities.

I strongly welcome the imminent establishment of a commission of inquiry, as well as the Council's intention to adopt targeted measures against perpetrators of violations against children. I also welcome the appointment by the Human Rights Council of the Independent Expert Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum, and I look forward to working closely with all mandate-holders to ensure complementarities in our work.

This crisis has been looming for over a year, and we have run out of time to prevent the violence from escalating. Our only option today is to scale up our response with robust, immediate and urgent actions. I am here today to plead for the Council's continued attention to the crisis in which the Central African Republic has plunged. It is my hope that the Council will unite to step up and sustain its engagement, with the support of the African Union and States of the region. Today's political commitment and mobilization of the international community to end the crisis in the Central African Republic must be swiftly translated into adequate responses to protect civilians, provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable, and accompany the transition towards the stabilization of the country.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Zerrougui for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dieng.

Mr. Dieng: I should like first of all to thank the Missions of Jordan and Luxembourg — and particularly you, Mr. President, and Ambassador Sylvie Lucas — for convening this briefing.

As Council members are aware, during our visit to the Central African Republic, our main objective was to assess the risk of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity occurring in the country and to advocate with transitional authorities and other relevant stakeholders for a cessation of violence and enhanced protection of the civilian population.

It was evident from what we saw and heard that the situation in the Central African Republic was

desperate. We received reports and testimony from victims and witnesses that told of shocking episodes of violence perpetrated against innocent Central Africans, including women and children. And this violence continues even as we are discussing the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic today.

As I said in my previous statement at the Arria Formula meeting of the Security Council on 1 November 2013, we face a situation of widespread and massive violations of human rights and abuses such as have never been witnessed before in the country. There have been widespread reports of summary executions and other forms of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, forced displacements, and acts of mutilation and sexual violence committed against adults and children, as well as the destruction and widespread looting of property, including hospitals, schools, churches and mosques. At the same time, as Council members will hear in greater detail from my colleague Assistant Secretary-General Kyung-wha Kang, the humanitarian situation is equally very disturbing.

In response to continued attacks by ex-Séléka elements targeting Christian civilians since December 2012, traditional, community-based self-defence groups across the country evolved into a more organized Christian militias known as the anti-Balaka, which have targeted ex-Séléka members and Muslim civilians suspected of supporting them. Reports received indicate that the anti-Balaka militias are becoming more organized than before and reportedly include some former army soldiers sympathetic to former President Bozizé. These former soldiers have reportedly played a leadership role in organizing attacks against Muslim civilians. For example, attacks in Bangui on 5 and 6 December resulted in the deaths of at least 1,000 people, most of whom were ex-Séléka members and Muslim civilians. In interviews with some individuals who claimed to be members of anti-Balaka militias in Bangui, they alleged that the militias have deployed in all 16 provinces of the country to mobilize Christian civilians against Muslim civilians.

On the other hand, the ex-Séléka elements continue to carry out attacks against Christian civilians throughout the country. While in the Central African Republic, we received testimony from people who had witnessed the killing of Christian civilians by ex-Séléka during a series of reprisal attacks.

The religious leaders in Bossangoa had divergent views on who bore responsibility for the ongoing violence in the province. The Bishop of Bossangoa diocese decried the abuses committed against Christians and the perceived complicity of the Muslim communities. On the other hand, the representative of the Muslim community in Bossangoa decried continued attacks against Muslims by anti-Balaka, who in his view were being hosted and supported by the local Catholic bishop.

In consultations with the then Head of Transition, Michel Djotodia, I stated to him clearly that he bears primary responsibility for security and that he should take all measures possible to protect all populations, irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliation. We urged Mr. Djotodia to join forces with religious leaders and civil society to immediately embark on a reconciliation campaign aimed at putting an end to the violence and to the hatred between communities.

The violence that was initially perceived as a confrontation between ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militias quickly evolved into a very dangerous confrontation between Muslim and Christian civilians, and the level of hatred between these communities shocked me. Incitement to commit violence on the basis of religion or ethnicity and deliberate and targeted attacks against civilians based on their identity are factors that indicate a high risk both of crimes against humanity and of genocide.

There is no doubt that the actions of the African-led International Support Mission for the Central African Republic (MISCA) and of French troops have contributed immensely to the protection of Central Africans, in particular in and around camps for internally displaced persons. However, it is evident that their resources and capacity to protect are limited, given the scale of the violence and the fact that it is happening across the country and MISCA is still only partially deployed. There is an urgent need for the full deployment of MISCA peacekeepers as soon as possible.

Another concern emerging from our mission and which has had a negative impact on civilian protection was the perception by some that peacekeepers deployed in the country were not neutral. Some interlocutors alleged that peacekeepers, in some instances, were perceived to side either with anti-Balaka or ex-Séléka

elements, which has eroded trust in some instances and affected their capacity to act.

In our interaction with religious leaders, we noted that, despite concerted efforts by the Archbishop and the Imam of Bangui to promote peace and dialogue, the impact of the initiatives undertaken since December 2012 remains limited. There is an urgent need to support and intensify such interreligious dialogue, both at the national and at the community levels.

In my assessment, the widespread, unchecked nature of attacks by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militias, as well as by armed civilians associated with them, against civilians on the basis of religion or ethnicity constitute crimes against humanity. If not halted, there is a risk of genocide in the country.

The primary responsibility for the protection of the population lies with the Central African authorities. However, recognizing the fact that the transitional authorities have neither the capacity to protect the civilian population nor to exercise control over the armed elements that are attacking them, particularly women and children, the international community must take concrete measures to assist the State to stop the abuses and protect civilians. There is an urgent need to support the full and effective deployment of MISCA. African countries should urgently contribute troops to the Mission.

There should be concerted efforts to promote and support a national peace and reconciliation process. There is an urgent need to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims to mitigate the existing ethnic and religious divisions in the country. As a first step among a series of initiatives, my Office is working to support the efforts of the President of the Commission on Human Rights of the National Transitional Council and the National Coordinator of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to organize peace forums in the country that will bring together community and religious leaders from seven provinces. But that is not enough. I urge the international community to contribute to the process.

It will be difficult to promote reconciliation and restore peace in the country without addressing the current culture of impunity. The human rights violations and abuses that have occurred have sowed seeds of hatred in communities. It is very important that we support all initiatives, including the Commission of Inquiry, to identify perpetrators and hold those responsible for violations and abuses accountable. We should also consider the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms. There can be no excuse or justification for condoning impunity.

Although the international community is responding late in the day, there is still a window to act to mobilize appropriate resources and to reverse one of the worst human rights and humanitarian crises of our time. We need to uphold our responsibility to protect Central Africans from the risk of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Dieng for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I want to thank the Security Council, under the presidency of the Kingdom of Jordan, for inviting us to contribute to the efforts to end violence in the Central African Republic. I am also grateful to the Permanent Representation of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for supporting this initiative.

Exactly one year ago, I briefed the Council following my visit to the Central African Republic from 5 to 13 December 2012 (see S/PV.6899). I noted the horrendous trends of sexual violence and warned that, if parties were not made to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, the consequences would be grave. I referred to two joint communiqués, the first signed between the United Nations and the Government and the other with armed groups participating in the national steering committee on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, aimed at consolidating the commitment of the parties to the conflict to prevent crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. I also recalled that the Central African Republic was a forgotten conflict, and I warned the international community to pay particular attention to the management of regional aspects of the crisis.

Today, the situation in Central African Republic has deteriorated and many of the worst predictions have, unfortunately, come true. Communities have taken up weapons, killing each other based on religious affinity. Part of the tragedy is that this extreme animosity is new; previously, those communities lived with each other, worked side by side and intermarried. Clearly this could have been prevented.

The participation of children in the commission of those atrocious crimes may signify the point of

no return, beyond which the cohabitation of certain communities may be impossible in the near future. There should be no doubt that the violence in the Central African Republic will stain the conscience of its people and the world forever.

At the invitation of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Babacar Gaye, I dispatched Nancee Oku Bright, my Chief of Staff, to participate in a joint mission to the Central African Republic, together with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, from 17 to 21 December 2013. The mission was assisted by a joint technical-level mission organized in conjunction with the Office of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, from 12 to 23 December, which travelled to Bouar and coordinated with a fact-finding team deployed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights, during the same period.

The delegation observed the unfolding situation of violence in the Central African Republic and, in some cases, eye-witnessed near-lynching incidents and empty villages with homes still burning. We learned about the growing strength and organization of armed groups, in particular anti-Balaka, who have colluded with former elements of the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) and are targeting Muslim combatants and civilians. Likewise, Muslim civilians have created militias to protect themselves and have engaged in retaliatory attacks, reportedly with the aid of Séléka and Chadian elements.

Sexual violence continues to be pervasive in the conflict. Between January and November 2013, the United Nations recorded at least 4,530 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by armed men, largely believed to be Séléka, in Bangui, Boali, Bossembélé, Damara, Mbaiki, Sibut and Prefecture de l'Ouham Pende. Following the 5 December attacks by anti-Balaka and FACA elements on military positions in Bangui, there are reports that conflict-related sexual violence has continued to be used. The team received reports of sexual violence used by anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka militias during house-to-house searches and retaliatory attacks. The mission also confirmed that forced marriages, sometimes involving children, were being contracted mainly by ex-Séléka elements.

There are also numerous allegations that internally displaced person camps, most of which shelter elements of armed groups, are the locus of conflict-related sexual violence. Victims are afraid to come forward to report these crimes due to the continued presence of elements of armed groups in communities and the absence of law and order. I am very disturbed by the finding of the mission that adequate provisions were not made to assist victims of sexual violence during the year-long conflict.

There are, however, some encouraging signs that the situation could improve. The involvement of religious leaders — Muslims and Christians alike — in ongoing initiatives to reconcile communities in the Central African Republic is commendable and should be supported by the international community.

The efforts of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic, under the able leadership of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Babacar Gaye, in the management of two delicate political transitions are worthy of high praise. In that regard, the international community, which has responded decisively in deploying the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic and the French Operation Sangaris, deserve commendation. I also welcome the recent announcement of the European Union of its intention to deploy a mission to the Central African Republic. The international community should provide the necessary support required for the implementation of resolutions 2121 (2013) and 2127 (2013).

However, important steps are required to be taken to stop the violence in the Central African Republic and limit the damage that is being inflicted on the citizens of that nation and on the conscience of humanity as a whole. The historic appointment of the first-ever female interim President of the Central African Republic is a source of hope and inspiration for all. Women's leadership at the highest levels of government is a powerful symbol of progress and change, but no leader can steer this transition alone. I therefore urge the international community to lend her its full support and cooperation so that she may be a force for unity and peace in a country that has known too much chaos and war.

Secondly, there is a need to conduct a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, which should include the repatriation of foreign combatants. Immediate steps should also be taken to improve the protection of civilians. This will help dissuade the creation of community-based self-

defence groups. Subsequent efforts to build a national army should take into account the application of human rights standards, as prescribed in resolutions 2121 (2013) and 2127 (2013).

Thirdly, the international community must improve the coordination of its efforts in the Central African Republic. The establishment of simple tools, such as emergency hotlines and coordinated rapid response mechanisms, can save lives. International forces operating in the Central African Republic also need to be sensitive to the specificities of the conflict, which requires an in-depth understanding of the crisis and its causes. This requires the deployment of specific expertise in civil-military coordination and the protection of civilians. Furthermore, the proactive management of regional dynamics could pay rapid dividends and lay the foundation for solving this crisis.

I congratulate the Council for its attention and the important steps it has already taken to stop the violence and ensure accountability for crimes. I commend the Council for establishing sanctions mechanisms and a commission of inquiry on human rights violations in the Central African Republic and call for their expedited implementation. The importance of deploying various fact-finding missions by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights cannot be overes.imated.

Finally, I once again call for an increased focus on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence by international partners to ensure that services are available to victims of sexual violence, especially in places of displacement and isolated locations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Kyung-wha Kang.

Ms. Kyung-wha Kang: I would like to thank you in particular, Mr. President, and the Permanent Representative of Luxembourg for giving us this opportunity to update the Security Council on the human rights and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic.

During the two months since the Arria Formula briefing by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Emergency Operations Director, the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic has deepened. The political system has failed, security infrastructure has disintegrated, there has been a complete breakdown of law and order, and public service institutions, which were already weak and overstretched prior to the current crisis, have ceased functioning. Horrific atrocities continue to be perpetrated against ordinary people in the country, as has been so powerfully described by the previous speaker.

More than half of the country's population — 2.5 million out of 4.6 million people — have been affected by the crisis and are in need of assistance, and people across the country are living in fear. More than 900,000 people have fled their homes and are internally displaced, including some 480,000 in the capital, Bangui, alone. At the airport in Bangui around 100,000 people are sleeping out in the open with little access to basic services and very limited supplies. Outside Bangui, thousands of people are hiding in the forest with no aid or services, too afraid to come out. Half of the displaced are children.

In addition to those internally displaced, some 86,000 Central Africans have fled as refugees and sought protection in neighbouring countries over the last year, mostly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also in Chad, Cameroon and the Republic of the Congo. This brings the total number of Central African Republic refugees in the subregion to 246,000. Some 28,000 third-country nationals have been evacuated from the Central African Republic since the crisis escalated in mid-December 2013.

We have received horrendous reports of people being killed or injured while attempting to flee the violence. Just a couple of days ago, a convoy carrying mostly Muslim families being evacuated from the village of Vakap and ultimately destined for refuge in neighbouring Cameroon was reportedly stopped in Bouar, northwestern Central African Republic, and attacked by people carrying grenades and machetes. At least 3 children and 19 adults were killed, and at least 23 people, including children, were injured.

The crisis in the Central African Republic is a top priority for the international humanitarian community. On 11 December 2013, we activated our highest level of response, known as a level 3 system-wide humanitarian emergency activation. We have reinforced humanitarian leadership on the ground through the deployment of a Senior Humanitarian Coordinator, Mr. Abdou Dieng. We have also sent our most experienced and skilled staff, released emergency funds and mobilized relief

supplies and pipelines. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee principals met twice this month to take stock of the situation and identity areas needing urgent attention. OCHA's Emergency Operations Director was back in the country just last week to meet with humanitarian partners and communities affected by the crisis.

On the ground, non-governmental organization partners and the staff of humanitarian United Nations agencies, funds and programmes are working closely with civil society and religious leaders from all communities to deliver assistance in a very dangerous and unpredictable environment. The World Food Programme has mobilized food for around 315,000 people in December and January. Médecins Sans Frontières is leading medical assistance. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has provided crucial relief items, including blankets and mattresses, for some 20,000 people this month, and thousands more will receive relief in the coming days. UNICEF and the World Health Organization have supported the Ministry of Health and other partners to vaccinate some 72,500 children at 17 sites this month. The International Organization for Migration is monitoring displacement and airlifting thousands of stranded migrants from the Central African Republic with priority attention given to the most vulnerable, such as those needing medical attention.

One of our main challenges to date has been the international community's chronic underfunding of the crisis. Last week, we revised the humanitarian appeal, taking into account the rapidly deteriorating situation. We now require over $551 million for our response in 2014.

On that point we have good news. At the High-Level Meeting on Humanitarian Action in the Central African Republic, which was co-chaired in Brussels on Monday by the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Ms. Valerie Amos, and the European Union Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Ms. Kristalina Georgieva, Member States generously pledged over $200 million for humanitarian assistance and an additional $280 million for development and long-term reconstruction. Those very welcome pledges will allow us to provide life-saving food, drinking water, shelter and health care for the next few months. However, we need much more.

Humanitarian assistance cannot solve the situation in the Central African Republic. The collapsing State, after years of neglect and failure by the international community to heed the warning signs of a looming crisis, cannot be shored up with humanitarian assistance. Security and stability must be urgently restored.

The ongoing deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, supported by French troops, has had a positive effect in the areas where it is operating, and the political developments over the past week, including the designation of a new interim President and the agreement of the European Union to deploy troops, have given people in the Central African Republic hope. However, they remain fearful and sceptical in the light of the horror that they have seen and endured. The international community must consider all options for re-establishing security.

The international response must also build stronger and more resilient communities in the Central African Republic. We need to look beyond today and take immediate action to restore livelihoods, preserve community support structures and strengthen local economies in order to provide a foundation for early recovery and long-term development.

The root causes of the conflict, including lack of effective, inclusive and efficient governance institutions, poor management and distribution of access to natural resources, including diamonds, fragile social cohesion and deep-seated feelings of marginalization must be urgently addressed. We need to support civil society, religious leaders and local communities as they strive to heal the wounds of violent conflict, rebuild social cohesion, stabilize communities and reduce sectarian violence, including through interfaith dialogue. Community reconciliation is crucial to protecting the internally displaced people in the Central African Republic.

We have already seen the human cost of the international community's neglect of the Central African Republic. We need to act urgently.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Kang for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.